

**Project Homeless Connect (PHC)**  
**Housing Information Area**  
**Volunteer Guidelines**  
*Updated for PHC VI - 8/4/05*

**Hello!**

Thank you very much for volunteering for the PHC Housing Information (HI) area. The purpose of these guidelines is to orient you to how PHC works, what we provide at the HI area, and to ensure you are equipped with the knowledge and resources needed to assist clients.

**What is Project Homeless Connect (PHC)?**

PHC is a bi-monthly event in which volunteers outreach to homeless persons on the street and encourage them to return to the Linkage Station, where additional volunteers help to connect them with the array of services available there. The ultimate goal of PHC is to assist homeless persons receive the services they need to help them leave the streets.

**What will happen on the day of PHC?**

The following, excerpted from [www.projecthomelessconnect.com](http://www.projecthomelessconnect.com), is an outline of the sequence of each PHC event.

*8:30-9:00 am (Before the Event Starts):*

Volunteers arrive, sign-in, and get their t-shirts that identify them as volunteers both at the event and on the street. All volunteers and organizers gather to hear any last minute information about the event and receive encouragement from the Mayor and other key organizers. Volunteers are split up into their volunteer groups and given last minute orientation and instructions. Then it's time to open the doors and hit the streets!

*9:30 am to 1 pm Connecting with the Homeless:*

Working in groups of 3 the Street Outreach teams hit the streets to engage the homeless population and encourage them to visit our linkage station. They are given specific areas to walk and communication links with the small fleet of vans that provide easy transportation to get to the linkage station.

*10 am to 3 pm At the Linkage Station:*

Once at the Linkage Station every person is greeted by a volunteer and directed to the Triage area.

*Step 1- Triage:*

The Triage teams are a critical part of making this all successful. The triage teams greet the clients and interview them to help determine what services they need. It can be as simple as just needing a meal or as complex as needing medical, legal, and general assistance services. Triage team members are available to help escort the client through the services as well.

### *Step 2 – Getting the Services:*

As **Project Homeless Connect** grows the variety of services under one roof that the clients can connect with is increasing and is truly inspiring. Because each client is unique and the combination of services that they need is different, their individual needs will dictate exactly how they move through the Linkage Station. The list of services provided is growing and include the following and more:

- Medical & Benefits (CAAP, GA, SSI)
- Behavioral Health
- Housing Information
- Shelter Reservation
- Veterans Assistance
- Domestic Violence Counseling
- Mental Health Counseling
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Methadone treatment
- Legal Assistance
- Discharge Planning
- Food, Activities & Giveaways

Each client is individually greeted, assessed and given a check-sheet form to help them and the volunteers better coordinate the services they need. Each service station area is in communication with other service areas to help ensure this is as smooth a process as possible. The escorts and volunteers throughout the Linkage Station are also available to help direct clients.

### *Step 3 – Discharge:*

The discharge volunteer teams check-in with each client before they leave to make sure that they visited the service stations available and appropriate for that client. They collect all client forms (used for data analysis later) and help the client get to any follow up appointments or connect to an service agency that may be appropriate for their needs. It is one of the goals for **Project Homeless Connect** that in conjunction with outreach efforts from the various participating organizations that there be enough volunteers with the skills necessary to do follow-up outreach with the clients after each event. This outreach would include helping to ensure that the clients can follow-through on their appointments made the day of the Outreach event.

The Discharge team is one of the quality control pieces of this process, helping to make sure clients don't fall through the cracks.

### *Step 4 – Gift Bags:*

Each client is given a "gift bag" that contains some of the basic necessary hygiene products, like toothbrushes and toothpaste, and various other items.

### *3:30 pm Wrap-up and Debrief:*

After the event, volunteers and organizers gather again to wrap-up and debrief about the event that day. Some of the initial numbers available are

reported and there is an open discussion with the organizers and the Mayor to offer ideas and lessons learned.

As a Project Homeless Connect volunteer, you should register on [www.projecthomelessconnect.com](http://www.projecthomelessconnect.com) to receive regular updates on the event and to receive a t-shirt when you check in on 8/4. You do not need to check an area of interest as you are already associated with Housing Information.

### **The Housing Information Area (HI)**

HI is one of the many services areas at the Linkage Station. Staffed by approximately 10-15 volunteers, HI provides one-on-one housing counseling to interested homeless clients geared toward helping clients identify and pursue their best avenues to permanent housing. Clients may ask questions related to housing opportunities through the County Adult Assistance Program (CAAP), check their status on the Shelter Plus Care waiting list, receive information about and apply directly for public housing and other wait lists, and discuss general housing issues with a counselor. HI is co-located with the Shelter table so that interested clients can receive a shelter reservation.

Two types of volunteers are needed for the HI area:

*Housing Counselors* provide brief one-on-one housing counseling sessions for interested clients. It is preferred that housing counselors have prior experience helping clients navigate San Francisco's housing systems for homeless persons (including Shelter Plus Care, the Housing Wait List for Persons with AIDS, Housing Access Team/CAAP). "Generalists" will ask preliminary questions, provide basic information, and then suggest the client visit with other housing counselor "specialists" on hand who can assist clients with program-specific questions/issues. Examples include:

- Housing Wait List for Persons With AIDS (DPH)
- Shelter Plus Care (Human Services)
- San Francisco Housing Authority (public housing)
- Community Housing Partnership (non-profit owned housing)
- Housing Access Team (CAAP/Human Services)
- Tenderloin Housing Clinic (Housing First/master leased housing)

*Client Support Volunteers* are needed to distribute numbers, greet clients, familiarize them with what is provided at the HI area, direct them through the available resources at the Housing Information area and re-direct them to other services as necessary. Client support volunteers also escort clients to specific other services areas at the request of a Housing Counselor. Ali Schlageter is the Client Support Volunteer lead for Project Homeless Connect VI.

### **Client Flow**

Clients will access the Shelter/Housing Area through one entry point. They will be familiarized with what is available by a Client Support Volunteer and handed a number. Another client support volunteer will call numbers in turn (there may be a wait before seeing the shelter reservation volunteers and/or the housing counselors). Another client support volunteer/escort will then link with the client and go to the Shelter Reservation area with the client. Here they will be asked if they are using shelter, and if not, whether

they would like to receive a shelter reservation for that night. Clients may also be asked to visit with shelter representatives if they have specific concerns/questions.

After visiting with shelter reservations, the escort will then take the client to the housing information area, where he/she will be asked preliminary information by "generalist" counselors. The generalist may be able to address the client's question or provide basic information that meets the client's needs. If not, the client will be directed to "specialists" within the housing information area for more in-depth information. Finally, the escort will make sure the client gets to the next area of his/her interest or to discharge.

### **How to Provide Housing Counseling (Generic Protocol)**

The following is a general guideline for providing housing counseling in the context of PHC. It is provided so that the services and information offered are uniform and correct. However, you are free to offer additional information you believe will be helpful to the client given the specifics of their situation.

1. Welcome the client and invite them to sit down opposite you.
2. Ask the client for his/her Triage form and briefly review the client's income, housing status and other information.
3. Interview the client regarding their housing status:
  - Are they using shelter? If not, have they received a shelter reservation today? (Redirect if necessary.)
  - Are they scheduled to move into housing? Are they on any housing wait lists (which)? Have they had any recent housing interviews? (What was the outcome?)
4. Explore client's housing options (as appropriate)
  - **Check name on Shelter Plus Care (S+C) list.** If client is on this list, direct the client to the S+C table so that the client can make a recertification appointment. Note this follow-up activity on the client's triage form.
  - **If client self-discloses as having HIV/AIDS**, direct to the HWL table for checking against the Housing Wait List and guidance.
  - **If the client is a shelter resident** and CAAP recipient, they may qualify for housing under Human Services' Housing First Program. The client should be advised to remain in close contact with their shelter case manager (if applicable) and/or their CAAP worker, who will notify them of housing opportunities (direct to HAT table for more in-depth information). If the client is a shelter resident and not a CAAP recipient (other form of regular income), has s/he spoken with his/her case manager regarding a referral to Tenderloin Housing Clinic? (if so, what was the outcome?)
  - **If the client reports no income** (but interested in housing), has the client signed up for a CAAP appointment? Urge the client to consider CAAP as a possible avenue to permanent housing.
  - **If the client discloses a recent eviction**, has s/he received legal services related to the eviction? (Direct as appropriate at the conclusion of the counseling session.) If the eviction was from a Tenderloin Housing Clinic building, s/he can speak to one of the THC Housing Counselors

volunteering for PHC regarding how the situation can be addressed so that s/he can be housed at THC again.

- **If the client is interested in getting on wait lists and/or applying for Public Housing**, direct to CHP and/or SFHA.

5. Provide a copy of the "Affordable Housing Wait List Opportunities" list, highlighting or discussing options that are especially relevant to the client (senior housing, etc.).
6. Double check to see that you have provided clear follow up instructions to the client.
7. Direct client to next applicable services area, asking a client support volunteer to escort the client if necessary.

***Please note:***

*HI does not offer housing placements.* You will in all likelihood be approached by clients who have heard that PHC clients receive immediate housing placements ("stabilization" rooms). All stabilization placements are offered following assessment by the clinical professionals associated with the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). Eligibility for the very limited stabilization units available will be targeted to those individuals who are most in need of such a resource in order to recover/stabilize from issues related to mental illness, medical conditions, and substance abuse. Please note: There will be very few stabilization placements available for the 8/4 PHC event.

***What is a stabilization unit?***

PHC offers a limited number of stabilization units for clients who, due to medical, mental health or substance abuse conditions, would not be able to utilize shelter while they work to enter permanent housing. Stabilization units are offered in privately run SROs. No rent is charged, but the client must agree to work with their assigned Intensive Case Manager (ICM) on securing income and otherwise preparing for entry into permanent housing.

**"Script" for Client Support Volunteers (Greeters)**

It is very important to minimize frustration for clients by being very clear about what we can and cannot provide to clients in the Housing Information area *before* they are seated in the waiting area. Our experience has shown that clients are hopeful that they will be offered immediate placement in housing, and become very disappointed and frustrated when they learn they are not going to be linked to an immediate housing opportunity in the Housing Information area.

For this reason, the following script is recommended:

Thank you for stopping by. In this area, we are offering shelter reservations and information about housing opportunities. Our housing counselors can provide general information on housing options in San Francisco based on information about yourself that you provide. We **do not** offer housing placement at this area. We strongly recommend that you visit our shelter reservation table. There may be a wait for housing counseling. If you feel you do not need/want housing counseling, please feel free to take our affordable housing list with you.

**Safety**

To address issues of safety and behavioral health crisis, PHC will have a roving crisis resolution team available, as well as police personnel.

**Logistics**

The Project Connect Linkage Station for PHC VI (August 4) is at Bill Graham Civic Auditorium (99 Grove Street). The HI area is located on the Polk Hall side of the Central Auditorium.

Please report to Bill Graham no later than 9:00 AM on the morning of August 4. After signing in and receiving your t-shirt, please be seated in the main area for opening remarks and instructions. The HI Team will meet at the HI area by 9:45 a.m. Needed materials will be distributed at this time.

Shelagh Little is your Team Leader and will be on-site at the Housing Information area all day. Please reach her at (415) 725-1354 on the morning of PHC if you will be delayed, or any time during the day when/if you wish to consult.